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## EDITORIAL.

Many people have asked why it is that Kennett Roshi settled in America when she returned to the west, rather than in her native England. This month we are reprinting an article that originally appeared in Journal of the Zen Mission Society in November of this year. In part it Roshi gives some of her reasons for not settling in England.

I know from having studied with her that she left England and went to the East because she could not find the real depth of Buddhism in England. She had studied what there was available here from the Buddhist Society and other groups, but nowhere could she find the true commitment that is necessary to make progress with training.

When Roshi returned she found us still not prepared to take Zen seriously, nor even to acknowledge those who did. And so she went to America with much sadness at our plight. I have often asked her if she would return and always receive the same answer, "When English Buddhists stop playing at Zen and commit themselves to training and not to fame and gain."

If we look into our own hearts can we truly say we are prepared to take our religion seriously, or do we at bottom shy away from facing up to it? Are we everying prepared to bow down to Life and rededicate ourselves utterly to the task ahead, or do we hold something back 'just in case?' Until we truly commit ourselves to the deep training of everyday life there will be no Buddhism in England, so what need have we of Buddhist teachers?

Daiji Strathern.



## The Cost of Reality.

One can only ever answer questions from ones own experience. This is why it is so extremely difficult to answer anything ever asked, to ever give an answer that can be useful to more than one person at any time. It is simple enough to say that one must be willing to lay ones life on the line in order to gain enlightenment; and I can read through my diary and know what it took to live through those years, burning my boats behind me as I went - it is quite another thing to do that. The reading of anothers efforts, and the making of one's own are such totally different things; just as the answering of the title question of this article for one person, although it is identically the same question as that asked by many others, will perhaps touch only one, for there are no general answers to such questions that will touch all people; and yet one must make some attempt to communicate answers. So this article is offered in the hope that some one thing here, out of all the possibilities offered, may be of use to each one of you who reads it. As I said at the beginning I can only speak from my own experience; I cannot speak from the experience of others. I know what the cost of understanding - the cost of reality - was for me. For you the cost will be just as heavy, albeit in a totally different way from that of myself. First of all you must be willing to burn all your boats, and all your bridges behind you. Nothing whatsoever can be held back. Neither life, nor liberty, nor beliefs, nor country, nor patriotism, nor love, nor wife, nor children, none of these things must be allowed to stand in the way. You must be willing to get rid of them all. This is known as burning the Buddha, for that which you love, that which you cling to, is the Buddha which you must have so, when this type of Buddha gets in your way you must indeed kill it, destroy it, if you would know the perfection of Zen.

Those of you who have been reading my diary\* have

Kennett Roshi's diary is currently being serialised in the Shasta Abbey Journal, soon to be published as 'The Wild, White Goose.'

done so, I hope, with much more than an eye to curiosity or a desire to see what happens when one is enlightened. I also hope that what comes over to most of you is that was playing the mosy deadly of all games - a game that in English parlance, "For keeps." My life, both physical and spiritual, was as much on the line all the time as a soldier in battle; it had to be; there could be nothing whatsoever held back. The real danger of doing the abcd however, is that the idea can become romantic. Even Dogen Zenji fell under the spell of this. "After all," he says "if I were to loose my life while studying the Way here in China, I would recieve a magnificent funeral with gr monks to perform it, so what does it matter that I ill treat my body in order to find the Truth, in order to f the Way?" Only years later did he realise the importance of the body, and the much greater sacrifice that was required of him than merely that of loosing his life. most people the loss of life seems to be the most important the greatest sacrifice, that one can make. I assure you is not. We only fear the act of dying we do not fear death itself. We hope that the act will be swift and in dying we think of the glory that will follow us, as indeed did Dogen. This makes such thoughts tolerable; death is seen as a one time act. The reason why most of us are not enlightened however, is because the act of dying to self must be made at every moment of the day and night. It is very easy to give up that which we hold "Most dear, as we call it, i.e., life itself; it is much more difficult to give up self, which is what we really hold most dear, and go on living afterwards without it. But that is exactly what is required of someone who reaches understanding. He must not be willing to surrender his life aimlessly for the sake of studying, for the sake of Zen, for the sake of Buddhism; he must be willing to go on living after surrendering his ego, after surrendering that which he holds dear, after cutting all the ties which, to him, really matter. He can step off into death for no one knows what is beyond it but all hope that it will be better than what they have now. There is the element of risk, the element of excitement, the element of hope in death, but



step off into the nothingness of the giving up of self, to cut the ties with those whom you love most, to give up wife and family, friends, parents, relations and in my own case, my country, is not nearly as simple as it may look and I can assure you that facing death in Sojiji was a lot simpler (as in the case of my first great experience when I was a Junior Trainee) than ever it was to go on doing the endless training afterwards. Anyone can make the grand gesture once; but to go on making it endlessly, day after day after day, that is what matters; that is the real endless training. And it is that which is truly the cost of understanding, for the instant you allow anything to become of importance as a possession, the instant you allow yourself to possess anything, to have anything, to want anything, then indeed in ratio to the amount you want, you are outside your own clear, pure understanding. And so you can call this understanding "living death," "deathly living," "understanding beyond understanding," "thought beyond thought," "thinking beyond thought," a place where one acts and knows and speaks and is beyond that which the world understands as acting and speaking and living, and this state requires the constant giving up of self, not once but every moment of the day and night; it requires the constant cutting of the ties - not just once but eternally. Yes, you cut them once; yes, you make the grand gesture once but thereafter, every little root, every little weed of self must be pulled out and anything that springs up, any sign of self must be removed. Shakyamuni Buddha always carried his begging bowl, always wore his robe and always shaved his head, even after his enlightenment, for he knew that there is no other thing than this constant training. If he had given it up for only a moment his Buddhahood would have been lost for that moment and regained when he recommenced his training.

If one is to attain the perfection of Zen one must understand that the Buddhas and Patriarchs demand everything not just a lot. I myself found this out when I returned to England from Japan.

I know that a number of people have wondered why it was that I decided to come to America instead of staying

in England. I had been invited to come to America as a parish priest and as that I came, but there was more to than just the invitation. There was the necessity of doing that which had to be done, to the very best of my own ability, and that was a physical impossibility in England. Do not misunderstand me. I have loved and all will love England and her people; after all, she is the country that gave me birth. But I cannot go along with delusions and I tell you this story as an illustration the price that I paid, and that you may one day have to pay, if you wish to go further than the surface and deep your own studies. If you wish to do this nothing can stand in your way, nor must it be allowed to stand in your way. As I said earlier, it is easy to give up life; it is not always easy to give up country and friends. So I went to England in the naive hope that what I had believed to be the state of the country that I had left behind had been a figment of my own imagination, and not in reality what I had feared it was. I left England that first time in anger and disgust at its dilettante approach to religion; its scoffing at love and sincerity; disgusted at Buddhist and Christian organizations that played religious games. "Watch your mind float in and out of the window, watch it go around the block and come back in again." This was what I was told to learn to meditate! "Prayer to God is required of you when you want something, nothing more." Thus was I taught to pray at school! A person would come back from the east and we would all be told by the Buddhist layman in charge, "Put on a good show. This one's come back from the East. They've seen the real thing." What the hell were we doing and what was our Buddhism? I cannot give you all of my thought but I can tell you this: If you had ever lived and been brought up, in England during her last days of Empire you would understand. It was all right to study what the wogs taught; you could be interested in it but you were a Briton, a great and important person. You studied what these lower orders of humanity taught and wrote. You couldn't of course, take it seriously. I was disgusted by this attitude of mind. Here were we, The British, suffering from the idea that we were the only people that were right, that Christianity was superior to everything and the millions who had lived and died under



Buddhism, which we pretended to profess, were in some way inferior to the Christians. And still we were trying to be Buddhists. What in the name of all that mattered, were we trying to do? I believed in Buddhism; it was the only thing that made any sense to me, and yet the instant I tried to do anything seriously with it I was outside I was wrong, completely and utterly wrong; I had taken it seriously. Some one person put it to me, "I must say it, my dear, don't go native." So why were they there? What were they trying to do? And then by accident I met Koho Zenji. I told him I wanted to study Buddhism seriously and he said, "Come to Japan, be my disciple." I went.

It was easy to put my life on the line. That didn't matter any longer. What did matter was the insincerity, the stupidity, the "holier than thou" attitude of these people who believed that they, because they were, because they had held the empire, because what they were studying was the teaching of a conquered people, were superior to those teachings, after playing games with them. The Buddhist organizations of London were as the London clubs, full of sound and thunder, like empty cans rattling around in marble halls. And so I went to the East, saying, "If I can indeed bring back real Buddhism then this insincerity will cease. Then they will know the joy of sincerity." I said, I was that naive. I went back to England from Japan almost ten years later as a fully qualified priest and teacher; I had been invited to come back. On arriving here I was asked not to go to any of the London Buddhist organizations and I was given a haystack (I am quite serious about this) in Gloucestershire which I was told I could meditate in if I wished with those who wished to come and meditate with me. It was made very obvious and very clear once again that one should not take such things as Buddhism seriously: if one did then indeed one was beyond the pale. At least two other people said to me: "It is very dangerous to go native, and you, my dear, have done just that. Look at you - you shave your head and you wear robes. Some one here does that with, of course, the exception of the

Thais and the Ceylonese who, in any case are Ceylonese and Thai. Some Englishmen have tried it but it has always been so embarrassing."

If you are unwilling to have the courage of your convictions then you are, as far as I am concerned, unfit to be a Buddhist. If you do not understand the purpose which Shakyamuni shaved his head and wore his robes and carried his begging bowl, then indeed you will never understand Buddhism. I went to the north of England with those who had survived living in the haystack with me (during that particular time it had snowed in England and I'm not particularly young nor am I particularly strong.) That was the welcome home that I got after ten years. I'm not complaining; I am only explaining why it is that when America offered me the job here as a parish priest, and made it obvious that they believed in what they were doing both as a nation and in religion, I came. England has complained to me many times, "Why don't you return?" I would have thought that the answer was obvious. England wants Buddhism on her own terms. She wants to play with it; she wants to be a dilettante. She wants all of the advantages and none of the consequences. There is no way that you can get the truth of Buddhism without sacrifice. And I am not prepared to live in a haystack for believing that what I am doing is real. I have never thought of myself as a saint. And so I recently became an American citizen, not because I wanted to leave England, but because like the first Americans, my sincerity was not acceptable to my fellow Britons. The first Americans were not revolutionaries for the sake of being revolutionaries; they revolted against injustice; they revolted against the insincerity of England which said that they were Britons and refused to treat them like it. I have revolted against the insincerity of British Buddhists. The price that I must pay for that revolt is of course, that I can no longer be a Briton. Either one must believe in the way in which people behave where one lives or one cannot live there successfully. I tried for something like fifty years to find sincerity, to find reality, amongst my fellow Britons. I spent ten years in the east in the hope that if I could take back the "real thing" then indeed they would change



from their insincere ways. As I said, I was that naive. Dogen Zenji, after trying to spread Soto Zen in Japan, came to the conclusion that then was not the time to spread it. This was in the thirteenth century when Rinzai had degenerated into poetry making and flower arrangement, when art and music had replaced the sincerity of personal endeavor. Whilst in no way being able to match up to the magnificence of Dogen, I have the same problem as he. Now is not the time to spread the truth in England for people are just too interested in the peripheral ideas of Zen - flower arrangement, art, poetry, martial arts - everything that Dogen warns against and that Soto, the oldest of the Zen schools, warns us about as distractions from real understanding. As I told Rev. Mark Strathern a long time ago, it doesn't matter who brings the Truth to England: what matters is that it comes. Dogen Zenji did not see the spread of Zen in Japan. That was left to his third descendant, Rev. Keizan Zenji, and I am content to leave the spread of true Zen in England, to those who come after me, for there is no way that I shall see it, as things are. The first time that I left England I left her in anger; now I leave her in sadness but with the hope that what I have brought back from the east may, in years to come, be the seed of Buddhism in England. I shall never return to England. There is no point. In a roundabout way I have told you what it can cost to have understanding. Laying one's life on the line is an easy thing. It takes a long time to discover that there are some things in this world that matter a lot more than life itself and some of those things are the precious delusions of our egos. I have known students say to me, "I sat down, I didn't care if it killed me," to which I have replied, "Then why are you still carrying around these ideas?" Do not suffer from the idea that giving up the ego is something that you do once. The first time it is spectacular and we tend to be lulled by that into thinking that that is all that it takes. The drudgery of living it every day of the week, every hour, every minute, of having ourselves stripped of everything we value, everything that we have ever believed in, everything that we have ever loved, that is the poverty of spirit, the giving up of the ego, the price that the Buddhas and Patriarchs demand of those who would find the perfection of Zen. For each of

you that price will be different, but it will be no less heavy. I ask you before you undertake this study, are you prepared for the cost?

Understand that mine is indeed a voluntary refusal to return to England. At any time I can do so, if I am willing to pay the price for doing it, i.e., ostracisation for believing in what I am doing. It is the fact that I am not willing to pay that price that has made it necessary for me to become an American. America is a young country - alive, vibrant. (I am aware that I shall be dubbed an incurable romantic for this comment.) She doesn't rely on old traditions and old clubs, nor does she rely on what is known in English parlance as the "old boy system," "the old school system." If once you walk outside the conventions, wear the wrong sort of hat, the wrong cut of clothes, if once you dare to be yourself, you are already beyond hope as far as these British clubs are concerned. I put myself beyond them long ago. I knew it when I left England the first time. It was just that I was naive enough to believe that when I was older things would be different, and that maybe the war and the loss of the empire would have allowed sanity to grow in England. So in a very real sense I became an American for exactly the same reasons that the first Americans did: because I could not believe in a system whereby you had to be born into a specific class and behave in a specific way once you were in it, the way of the insincere and the dilettante, the way of boredom, the way of talking about your fellow men or trying to put them down, trying to tear them to pieces unless they thought and believed as you did.

In this world there are various ways of martyrdom. In the old days it was simple; all you did was kill someone. Nowadays you crucify him with ostracisation unless he agrees with your opinions. I am not of the stuff of which martyrs are made. I am alive here and now. What I have to teach is real, and breathing and warm and loving, and that is what I am going to pass on. There is no room in me, or in it, for stilted, old fashioned or outmoded mannerisms. Zen must be alive and free. It must not be



a fad brought over by a few stray orientals who cannot make it in their own country and so have fled to a foreign one where they can live off their orientalism which, unfortunately is so with some of the Japanese that have come to the west - not all but some. It is a religion that must be lived and to which everything must be given, nothing whatsoever being held back - and its adherents must in no way be slaves to their own needs or to organizations either here or in Japan.

During my years in Japan I used to dream on occasion of going back to England, of being with my own people again. I went back to England and I found out who my own people were; and they were not in England. For that matter they were not in any particular country. There are a few of them everywhere, just one or two. The place where I have found both has been America; the place where there has been room for me has been America. It is pleasant to live in a house instead of a haystack. The comment of one English Master, a Japanese, when asked why he was leaving England and not returning was, "because you don't know how to treat people." This was after he had been required to paint this room, having been told that there was accommodation for him, and being expected to nurse someone without pay for most of his time in the country. I do not know how long it will take for the British to understand that if they want the country to be revitalised spiritually they have to stop playing games and trust their own people in religion. They have to stop playing games also with orientals who they can sneer and laugh at and take insincerely. They have complained many times about the number of young people, young intellectuals, who have left England. The foregoing in different versions, is the reason why.

People still complain to me that I do not live in England but they do not put their own house in order. Whenever I have been there they have been willing to go only so far and no further, or willing to come via the back door saying, "Well, we can't sort of let people know we've come, because it wouldn't be good for others to know that we came." If you haven't the courage to shave

your head, to wear your robe and carry your begging bowl  
in other words, if you haven't the courage of your convictions - don't come to see me whether you are in England or America. And if you have even a stick of the raft on which you have floated here left know that I will take away from you for there is no way that you can know the immaculacy of understanding whilst even a shred of safety remains. Know this well. Study it in detail. And know that my love for England is no less great although I have said goodbye to her.

J  
Jiyu Kennett.



## NEWS AND EVENTS.

Lectures and Retreats. This last month Daiji has given lectures at, amongst others, Kiel University as part of their foundation course; Lancaster and Durham Buddhist Societies, and Hexham County Secondary School. He held a day retreat at Loughborough, organised by Father Basil, a chaplain at Loughborough University, and a day retreat for the Newcastle group at Killingworth.

Jodo. On December 8th we celebrated Jodo, a festival commemorating the Buddhas enlightenment. We spent the day in accordance with the Buddha's own life style; we had one simple meal and the day was spent in meditation. In the afternoon a service was held during which the Diamond Sutra and the Hsinhsinming were recited. Part of the Offertory for Jodo says, "When Shakyamuni died he told his followers to make his teaching the light of their lives and to make their own lives shine as brilliantly as the sun. The light of Shakyamuni and his followers has shone through many centuries and has been transmitted to countless people. We must follow in the footsteps of those who have gone before us so that our own light shines in the same way, and we must transmit it even as they did, so that it may shine brightly in countless worlds and lives to come."

Retreat Dates. We will be holding weekend retreats on:-

January 3/4,  
January 31/February 1,  
March 6/7,  
April 3/4,  
May 1/2,  
July 3/4,  
July 31/August 1.

There will be a Jukai retreat on March 20-28. This retreat will only be open to those who have previously visited the Priory and who wish to take Lay-ordination and the Precepts or to those wishing to reaffirm their commitment.

Week retreats later in the year will be held on:-

May 29/June 6,  
July 10/18,  
August 21/29.

Please note that the week retreats end on the Sunday morning. Bookings can only be accepted for the whole period.

### Throssel Hole Priory Journal.

The Throssel Hole Priory Journal is published bi-monthly with six issues a year. The subscription rate is £2 per annum. Please send your subscription to:-

Throssel Hole Priory,  
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Northumberland NE47 8AL.

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### Selling Water By The River

The Priory is selling copies of Kennett Roshi's book "Selling Water By The River A Manual of Zen Training." The book includes Kennett Roshi's explanation of Zen meditation, training and Koans, as well as translations from Dogen and Keizan, the two great founders of Soto Zen in Japan. Also included are the scriptures and ceremonies of Soto Zen, much of which is used here at the Priory.

Price including postage and packing:-

Hardback £2.50.

The Priory is also selling booklets on Zen Meditation these contain extracts from Kennett Roshi's book, extra from some of her lectures and basic information on how to sit, how to make your own meditation cushions and benches etc. Price including postage 40p.

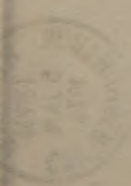


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